

# Congressional Notes

## Hang Up On High Public Phone Rates



**Constituents placing calls away from home often do not know which telephone company they are using.**

### Here's some advice for your constituents:

★ **Don't leave home** before calling their chosen long distance company and obtaining instructions on how to place calls through that company from public telephones.

★ **Stop** before making a call from a public telephone.

★ **Look** at the printed information on or near the telephone. The FCC's rules require each public telephone provider to post the following information and disclosures on or near each public telephone, in plain view of consumers:

- The name, address and toll-free number of the Operator Service Provider (OSP) providing the service for that telephone;
- Rates for all operator-assisted calls are available upon request; and
- Consumers have a right to obtain access to the interstate long distance company of their choice, and may call that company using that public telephone.

★ **Listen** after they dial the number to determine which OSP is handling the call. The FCC's rules require each OSP to identify itself at the beginning of a call and before any charges are incurred.

**Beginning July 1, 1998**, OSPs must also orally notify callers of their right to obtain rate quotations for interstate calls before a call is connected and billed. Your constituents will be able to find out the total price of a telephone call -- including any surcharges -- by simply pressing a button, such as the pound key, or staying on the line.

The price disclosure requirement will give your constituents the opportunity to hang up on high rates and to "dial around" OSPs by following their chosen long distance company's instructions for placing calls from public telephones.

**Beginning July 1, 1998**, constituents receiving collect calls from inmates in prisons, jails and other correctional or similar institutions will be able to obtain the price of the call by simply pressing a button or staying on the line.

OSP's providing operator services for inmate-only telephones will be required to orally notify the constituent to be billed for an inmate's collect call of his or her right to obtain rate quotations before the OSP connects and bills for an interstate collect call.

Your constituents can then decide whether or not they want to accept the collect call. Your constituents can also use the rate quotation information to decide whether or not they want to limit the length of the call.